

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MX
SUBJ: EXCELSIOR REAFFIRMS ITS VERSION OF O'NEILL STATEMENT

REF: MEXICO 3028

1. EXCELSIOR, MARCH 12, PUBLISHED TWO EDITORIALS AND A COLUMN REAFFIRMING THE EARLIER STORY BY FAUSTO FERNANDEZ PONTE THAT HOUSE SPEAKER THOMAS O'NEIL HAD INDEED SPOKEN IN AN "INADEQUATE" MANNER CONCERNING CONGRESSIONAL ADDRESSES BY VISITING FOREIGN LEADERS LOPEZ PORTILLO OF MEXICO AND TRUDEAU OF CANADA.

2. AS PROOF OF ITS EARLIER REPORT, EXCELSIOR PUBLISHED A LONG COLUMN BY FERNANDEZ PONTE (DATED WASHINGTON, MARCH 11) WHICH CONTAINS HIS BLOW-BY-BLOW ACCOUNT OF THE O'NEILL MATTER. AN EXCELSIOR EDITORIAL ALSO REFERRED TO INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICE (LATIN-REUTERS AND EFE) REPORTS OF THE O'NEILL INCIDENT AND CITED STORIES IN THE WASHINGTON POST AND WASHINGTON STAR WHICH ENERGETICALLY CONDEMNED O'NEILL'S CONDUCT. "EXCELSIOR'S OBJECTIVE", THE EDITORIAL STATED, "IS TO ALWAYS INFORM WITH TRUTH, OBJECTIVITY AND CLARITY; AND WHEN FOR HUMAN FAILINGS OF OUR ASSOCIATES SOMETHING INEXACT IS INSERTED, WE HASTEN TO CLARIFY IT OUT OF RESPECT
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FOR THE TRUTH AND THE LAW."

3. FERNANDEZ' LENGTHY COLUMN, CARRIED ON THE SAME EDITORIAL PAGE, BASICALLY REITERATES AND ELABORATES ON HIS EARLIER VERSION OF THE O'NEILL STATEMENT, ADDING, HOWEVER, THAT O'NEILL HAD PERSONALLY COMMENTED TO HIM (FERNANDEZ) AND A LOS ANGELES REPORTER THAT

THE PRIVATE LUNCHEON FOR JLP WAS A "WASTE OF TIME".
FOR DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION, EMBASSY IS POUCHING
A COPY OF FERNANDEZ' "COMPLETE STORY" OF THE INCIDENT.

4. COMMENT: FOLLOWING O'NEILL'S REPORTED DENIAL TO
VISITING MEXICAN DEPUTY AUGUSTO GOMEZ VILLANUEVA,
OTHER MEXICO CITY NEWSPAPERS WERE VERY CRITICAL OF
EXCELSIOR FOR IRRESPONSIBLE AND INACCURATE REPORTING.
NOW THAT EXCELSIOR HAS AGAIN HAD ITS SAY, HOWEVER, WE
HOPE THAT THE ENTIRE AFFAIR WILL QUIETLY FADE AND BE
FORGOTTEN. BY PUBLICLY TRUMPETING ITS COMMITMENT TO
TRUTH, OBJECTIVELY AND CLARITY, EXCELSIOR HAS
PUBLICLY COMMITTED ITSELF TO A STANDARD WHICH COULD
EASILY COME BACK TO HAUNT THE PAPER WHICH IS WIDELY
VIEWED HERE AS LIVELY AND INTERESTING, BUT NOT
ALWAYS SCRUPULOUS IN ITS PRESENTATION OF THE
NEWS.
THOMPSON

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